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AN

Assize-Sermon

Preach'd at

Kingston upon *Thames*,

On *Thursday*, *Aug.* 22. 1728.

To the Reverend Dr. Unknown

National Righteouſneſs, the foundation of Publick Proſperity, explain'd and recommended,

IN A

SERMON

Preach'd at the

Aſſizes held for the County of SURRY, at *Kingſton* upon *Thames*,

On *Thurſday*, *Auguſt* 22. 1728.

Before the Right Honourable the

Lord Chief Juſtice *EYRE*,

AND

Mr. Baron *HALE*.

Publiſhed at the Requeſt of the High-Sheriff and Grand-Jury,

By GEO. STEPHENS, M.A. Maſter of the Free-School in *Guildford*, Rector of *Weſt-Clandon*, and Chaplain to the Right Honourable *Thomas* Lord *Onſlow*.

LONDON:

Printed for T. COX at the *Lamb* under the *Piazza* of the *Royal-Exchange* in *Cornhil*. 1728.

AC 911. 1725. S76

To the Worſhipful

John Wall, Eſq;

High-Sheriff of the County of *SURRY*.

AND

To the Honoured Gentlemen of the

GRAND-JURY,

VIZ.

Sir *Thomas Steavens*, Knight.
Sir *More Mollineux*, Knight.
The Hon. *Richard Onſlow*, Eſq;

Nathaniel Roffey,	Eſquires.	*William Welch*,	Gentlemen.
Thomas Hucks,		*George Pottinger*,	
Samuel Whincopp,		*Thomas Chambers*,	
William Jenew,		*John Biſhopp*,	
James Clarke,		*Richard Smith*,	
Abraham Shard,		*John Hind*,	
Samuel Palmer,		*Thomas Beauvais*,	
Smith Meggott,		*Thomas Shirley*,	

This SERMON, publiſh'd at your Requeſt, is, with all Reſpect, dedicated by,

GENTLEMEN,

Your moſt obedient humble Servant

GEO. STEPHENS.

PROVERBS XIV. 34.

Righteouſneſs exalteth a Nation, but Sin is a reproach to any People.

THE chief Inquiry ariſing from theſe Words is this; What we are to underſtand by *Righteouſneſs* and *Sin*, to which ſuch great and certain, tho' different Effects, are here aſcribed. A Speculation by no means incurious or unuſeful, ſince by this we diſcover a Remedy for thoſe Evils which every one would ſeem willing to cure: *Righteouſneſs* being here mark'd out as the Health and Strength of a well-conſtituted Government, and *Sin* the dangerous Diſtemper, whoſe malignity ſpreads wide, weakens and diſorders, and at laſt proves fatal to the Body Politick.

But

But before I proceed, I would make an Obſervation or two on the Words as they lay before us; not only the better to comprehend their full ſenſe and meaning, but to engage our Attention and exactneſs in the Inquiry, to which they lead.

I. *Firſt*, When it is ſaid that *Righteouſneſs exalteth a Nation*, the expreſſion is full and ſignificant, and offers to our Minds an Idea of all the Bleſſings that can render a People great and glorious. It ſuppoſes Unity, Order and Firmneſs at Home, ſecured by good and equal Laws, under a wiſe, vigorous, and ſteady Adminiſtration; and Abroad, it ſuppoſes high Reputation and Credit, proceeding from the fame of Power and Riches, and hence to hold the Balance, and be to others the Arbitrators of Peace and War. Or, in the Scripture-Language, it is to be *God's peculiar People*; *to be high above all Nations in Praiſe, in Name, and in Honour.* For thus *Moſes* encourages the Children of *Iſrael* to Obedience, *Deut.* xxviii. from the 1ſt to the 13th Verſe; where, after enumerating the many Circumſtances of publick Proſperity, he adds, *the Lord ſhall make thee the Head and not the Tail:* and, *Thou ſhalt be above only, and Thou ſhalt not be beneath: if that Thou hearken unto the Commandments of the Lord thy God, which I command Thee this day, to obſerve, and to do them.*

So

So, again, When it is affirm'd that *Sin is a reproach to any People*, much more is thereby ſignified, than at firſt appears. It does not only mean that Sin is ſcandalous and matter of Reproach to a Nation, but that it ſhall actually be followed by Divine Vengeance, and puniſhed with all the Evils and Calamities that a People can apprehend and dread. And that it is uſual in Holy Scripture to repreſent National Judgments by ſome Circumſtance of Reproach, we may obſerve in the Chapter above cited *: where, after *Moſes* had enlarged on the many Miſeries which ſhould befal the *Iſraelites* upon their Diſobedience and Impenitency, he ſumms up all the Curſes ſo remarkably verified upon them to this very Day, *And thou ſhalt become an Aſtoniſhment, a Proverb, and a By-word among all the Nations whither the Lord ſhall lead thee.* The Prophet *Jeremiah* in the ſame Style denounces GOD's Wrath againſt *Jeruſalem* †: *And I will make this City deſolate, and an hiſſing: Every one that paſſeth thereby ſhall be aſtoniſhed and hiſs becauſe of the Plagues thereof.* And that Reproach may be underſtood in ſo full a Senſe as to contain a Compendium of Evils, we have a direct Proof in the Prophet *Daniel*||, where

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* Deut. xxviii. 37. † Jer. xix. 8. || Dan. xii. 2.

the whole Puniſhment of the Wicked at the Reſurrection is deſcribed by *Shame and everlaſting Contempt*. And in this the Holy Spirit does not only comply with a Figure of Speech uſual to the *Hebrews*, but ſpeaks likewiſe agreeable to the Sentiments of pure and uncorrupted Nature. For ſince the ſenſe of Shame is ſo painful and afflicting to an ingenuous Mind, that it exceeds all the Torments of the Body, ſo that Puniſhment is chiefly aggravated by it: And ſince, of all ſorts, that of National Reproach, where every thing generous is not extinguiſhed, pierces deepeſt and is moſt provoking; the threatning this as a Puniſhment may, with great elegancy in an elliptical Language, be choſen to repreſent all Evils and Inflictions whatſoever, in order to raiſe our Terror and Apprehenſion.

II. A *Second* Obſervation, I would make, is, concerning the manner whereby *Righteouſneſs* and *Sin* may be conceiv'd to have their different Effects on humane Society: How far theſe Influences proceed from certain Powers inherent in the Things themſelves, or from the immediate Interpoſition and Direction of Almighty GOD. This Point deſerves a thorough Conſideration and juſt Diſtinction; becauſe a right Notion of it is of great Conſequence to Mens moral Conduct of themſelves, under an awful ſenſe of Divine Providence;

vidence; and ſeems to be much of the ſame nature with that Queſtion in Philoſophy, and to admit of the like Solution, How far certain Qualities impreſt on Matter may be ſuppoſed to operate of themſelves, and to produce neceſſary Effects?

I am not about to ſuggeſt, as if GOD did not act by Second Cauſes, or that there is not an Order and Dependency between them and their Effects. Doubtleſs all the Works of GOD in this viſible World, are adjuſted in exact Weight and Meaſure, and done in ſo conſtant and regular a manner, as if according to fix'd and eſtabliſh'd Laws. But I would aſk the Favourers of the mechanick Syſtem, whence ariſe theſe Powers and Correſpondencies, viſible in the ſeveral Parts of Matter acting on each other? Are they all proper affections of Matter? Or do they not at times diſcover Effects ſuperior to, and beyond the combination of ſuch Nature and Qualities? In Honour to the greateſt Philoſopher of any Age, who has gone the fartheſt in calculating the Powers of Matter, and reducing the Laws of Motion to the greateſt Certainty, I muſt obſerve, that He, with no leſs Piety than Judgment, leads up our Thoughts to the Firſt Agent or Mover; without whoſe Concurrence, there could not be any ſuch thing as Gravitation or Attraction, that wonderful and general affection of

Matter. Here indeed has been the danger of the mechanical Philoſophy, that by ſuppoſing Things to ſubſiſt of themſelves after their Creation, and being fix'd in ſuch a courſe and order, it conſequentially leaves GOD to be an idle Spectator of his Works, and excludes Him, in ſome degree, from the immediate Government of the World.

Howbeit, * *He is not far from every one of us*, as the Apoſtle teaches the *Athenians*, *for in him we live and move and have our being :* And it is equally an Act of Almighty Power to uphold all Things in their exact and beautiful Order, as at firſt to create them and give them an Exiſtence.

To apply this Argumentation to the effects aſcribed to *Righteouſneſs* and *Sin*, in the Text. In our Reaſonings on this Subject we uſe ſuch Expreſſions, that *Righteouſneſs* and *Sin* produce ſuch Effects, or do in their own Nature tend to the Happineſs or Miſery of Man : and theſe are true and allowable Aſſertions, if underſtood in a ſober and qualified Senſe. But ſtill, How are they Cauſes of ſuch Effects ? Are *Righteouſneſs* and *Sin* real Subſtances or Agents ? In ſtrictneſs of Reaſoning they are only Acts or Habits of a Mo-

* Acts xvii. 27, 28.

a Moral Agent: And if they are certainly attended with ſuch Conſequences, this is owing to the direction of Almighty GOD; who gives them that Fitneſs and Diſpoſition, as Means to bring about ſuch Ends; and to which, when it is agreeable to his Juſtice and Wiſdom, according to the Holineſs and Perfection of his Nature, He will concur.

I conceive therefore it would be greatly for the ſervice of Religion, I am ſure it tends to give us an awakening and lively Impreſſion of GOD's Providence, and of his more immediate concern in the Iſſue and Event of Things, to keep cloſe to the Scripture Language, * *The Lord killeth and maketh alive: He bringeth down to the Grave and bringeth up. The Lord maketh Poor and maketh Rich; he bringeth low and lifteth up.* Or, to confine my ſelf to Inſtances of GOD's Providence over Men, as conſidered in Society: † *I form the Light and create Darkneſs, I make Peace and create Evil, I the Lord do all theſe things.* ‖ *Shall there be any Evil in the City*, and much rather may we argue Good, *and the Lord hath not done it?*

If

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* 1 Sam. ii. 6, 7. † Iſai. xlv. 7. ‖ Amos iii. 6.

If this was attended to, we could not forget GOD, or ever dare to leave Him out of our Schemes, upon whom the ſucceſs of every Council depends; who is not confin'd to any particular means to bring about his righteous Ends; and whether he acts by ordinary or extraordinary Methods, they are both alike to Him: And who, perhaps, for *this* very Reaſon, has placed the knowledge of Natural Cauſes, as we call them, as well as the chain of his Providence, out of our reach; on purpoſe to keep us Humble and Dependant. That Events are not in our Power, may hence be collected; ſince GOD often interpoſes to croſs the Purpoſes of Men: and then * *the Race is not to the ſwift, nor the Battle to the ſtrong, neither Bread to the wiſe, nor Riches to men of underſtanding, nor yet Favour to men of ſkill, but time and chance happeneth to them all.* It ſeems indeed *Time* and *Chance* to the Prophane, to thoſe, of whom it may be ſaid, that GOD *is not in all their Thoughts:* But to the Rational and Religious, who carry their Speculations beyond the ſurface of Things, it appears the acting and diſpoſal of the Supreme Mind; who, as He is preſent every where,

* Eccleſ. ix. 11.

where, directs all Things both * *in the Armies of Heaven, and amongſt the Inhabitants of the Earth*, with an uncontrolable Power, *for none can ſtay his hand, or ſay unto him, what doeſt thou?* And this leads me to a

III. *Third Obſervation*, That when it is ſaid, *Righteouſneſs exalteth* and *Sin is a reproach to a People*, it ſuppoſes GOD to proceed after a judicial manner, and as the Sovereign-Governor of the World. For, as GOD ſuperintends all things, and is a Being of infinite Rectitude, He cannot but approve of Virtue and hate Iniquity, and accordingly deal out his Rewards and Puniſhments. The Caſe of Men ſingly conſider'd, and as joint Members of ſome publick Body or Community, differs in this: GOD often reſerves them, as Individuals, to a future Judgment in another Life; this preſent being their Time of Trial and Probation. He may, and often does, ſuſpend the calling them to Account, till the general Day of Retribution, when every inequality of his Providence ſhall be balanced and adjuſted. But Nations will then be diſſolved with the Frame of the World; ſo that whatever juſtice is adminiſtred to

* Dan. iv. 35.

to Men, as link'd together in Societies, muſt be executed forthwith on the Stage of this World, and while the preſent State of Things ſubſiſts. But I need not labour, ſo plain an Argument, to which the Book of GOD gives ſo great Confirmation by a whole Series of Providences, which proves, that publick Bodies and Communities of Men have gradually riſen and declin'd, and were rewarded or puniſhed in proportion to their Virtue or Wickedneſs.

Let us lay together the ſumm of theſe Remarks. The firſt was neceſſary to give us a Notion of the greatneſs of the Rewards and Puniſhments here propoſed: The other two, to prove their Certainty; which depends on the Divine Attributes of Holineſs, Wiſdom, and Juſtice. So that the Text ſtands now to be conſider'd, not barely as a proverbial Saying, which, it is ſufficient if it be found often and for the moſt part true: But as the general Decree and Ordinance of Heaven, uniformly obſerved in *ruling the Kingdoms of Men*. It is not ſo much the Political Reflexion of a wiſe and great Prince, upon the Riſe and Declenſions of States and Empires, as the ſolemn Declaration of the ſupreme Governor of the World, Publiſhed to the Societies of Men, on what Conditions, and by what Means they may intitle themſelves

to

to GOD's Bleſſing and Protection, and avoid His dreadful Anger and Diſpleaſure.

Thus prepared, let us advance to the Inquiry, What *Righteouſneſs* may be ſuppoſed to conſiſt in, to which the Promiſe of ſo great Reward is annext; and the Nature of that *Sin*, in it ſelf ſo Reproachful, and followed with the Judgments of GOD.

I. *Righteouſneſs* is ſometimes underſtood as a diſtinct and ſingle Virtue, and is the ſame with Juſtice, and which muſt be allowed to be a Virtue of great Eminency and Importance. And the Aſſertion of my Text would thus be very true, that Juſtice has an extenſive Influence on the Proſperity of a People; the regular and impartial Adminiſtration of it ſhewing a Government Strong and Vigorous, and tending to preſerve it ſo in all its Parts. But altho' this be a good meaning of the Words, yet I Queſtion if it be the entire, the exact meaning of them. For as Righteouſneſs is here oppoſed to Sin, * or Sins in general, ſo it may properly be conſider'd, not as one Virtue, but as all collectively; and ſuppoſes either an Agree-

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* חטאת *the Hebrew Word rendred by the Septuagint* ἁμαρτίαι, *Sins.*

ment with ſome Rule, or a correſpondency with certain moral Perfections.

The Righteouſneſs of a Nation then may be conſidered in theſe different Views; either as the excellency of the Laws by which it is governed; or the moral Conduct and Qualities of the Perſons of which the Political Body conſiſts.

1. As to the Righteouſneſs of Laws, we have *Moſes* thus drawing the Character of the *Jewiſh* Polity, and founding the Grandeur of that People on this Notion; * *And what Nation is there ſo great, that hath Statutes and Judgments ſo* Righteous *as all this Law, which I ſet before thee this day.* The People of *Iſrael* had the diſtinguiſhing Privilege of being govern'd by a Collection of Laws of GOD's own appointment: And if we carefully weigh and compare them with the ſimplicity of thoſe Ages, the ſituation of the Country, the Temper, the Genius, the Circumſtances of that People, and eſpecially the Intention of GOD in going to take a Nation to Himſelf ſeperated from the reſt of the World, we muſt allow that they bear the Marks and Signatures of Divine Wiſdom, and deſerve the Commendation here affix'd

* Deut. iv. 8.

affix'd by *Moſes*, through whoſe Hands they were received.

It is true this Conſtitution was temporary, and proper to that Nation, and the Laws of it were peculiarly calculated for the Happineſs of that People under certain Views; ſo that they are by no means ſuited to any other People in different Circumſtances; yet I beg leave to obſerve the high Opinion which the Compilers of the Laws of *Alfred* had of them, ſo as to prefix not only the Decalogue, but many of the Judicial kind; and I think it muſt be allowed, that, on the account of their divine Original, they will ſerve to be a Guide to us in forming a Judgment of any Body of Laws, how far they are Righteous, and to point out to us the Excellencies that intitle them to that Character.

I would inſtance only in one. It is an obvious excellency of the *Jewiſh* Laws that they were plain and eaſy, both with regard to their Number and Perſpicuity. When Law-Books ſwell and become voluminous, no wonder the deciſion of Cauſes is attended with difficulty and confuſion. And, where brevity, as well as correctneſs, is not ſtrictly obſerved in compoſing Laws, there will be room for Perplexity and Uncertainty of Opinion. The Inconveniency of a numerouſneſs of Laws is unavoidably introduced by length of Time and new-ariſing Exigencies: But

whenever this becomes a Grievance, a Remedy has been mark'd out for us under the direction of a wiſe *Juſtinian*. Our Laws underwent ſeveral Reviews under our *Saxon* Anceſtors; and ſince our Conſtitution is built on their Model, and whatever Liberties we enjoy are in great meaſure owing to their Wiſdom, it may be wiſh'd that a Prince deſcended from the *Saxon* Line, would, on ſome favourable Juncture, enter on this great Taſk, and reſtore to us this *Righteouſneſs* as at the beginning: It would, I preſume, be no mean addition to the Regal Title, to be ſtiled, *The Reformer of our Laws*.

It is more within the courſe of my Inquiry, to proceed to the other Branch of this Head, which was,

2. To conſider the Righteouſneſs of a Nation, as a Perſonal Quality in the Moral and Religious behaviour both of the Governing and Governed.

He muſt needs be an incurious Obſerver on the Sacred Hiſtory who does not diſcern what a great Bleſſing a Religious Magiſtracy was to the People of GOD: And this too in ſuch a manner, and for ſuch Reaſons, as are not peculiarly confin'd to the Caſe of the *Iſraelites*, but ſuch as extend, and will hold good with regard to every Nation under Heaven.

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The Idea then of a good Governour does not wholly conſiſt in great Abilities, in an extent of Knowledge, in a ſagacity or happy ſkill and addreſs in Buſineſs; it comprehends likewiſe a probity and ſanctity of Manners, an exemplary Piety, and a well-temper'd zeal for Religion. And indeed, how do theſe Qualifications mutually conſpire for the Publick Good? Thoſe enable and teach how to hold the Reins of Government: The other give a Dignity and Authority to thoſe that hold them. The former ſupply the utmoſt aſſiſtance of humane Policy: The latter engage Heaven in the Succeſs; for thoſe * *that honour God, God will honour.* The Favour and Protection of GOD will follow them; and we may then piouſly preſume, that *the work of GOD will proſper in their hands.*

Now, tho' this Truth is always proper to be maintain'd, and is to be oppos'd to any artful Inſinuation, as if moral Qualifications were out of the Queſtion, and of little ſignificancy; yet will it by no means countenance or juſtify any Licentiouſneſs in cenſuring the Lives of our Superiors; whoſe Characters, as well as Perſons, ought, for all the Ends of Government, to be treated as Sacred.

I know

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* 1 Sam. ii. 30.

I know not how far it may be argued a Privilege, conſequential to our *Engliſh* Liberties, to ſit in Judgment upon, and queſtion the management of our Governours, in which Religion and Prudence teach us great Modeſty and Caution: However, *let us not uſe* this *Liberty as a cloak of Maliciouſneſs*. For thoſe certainly are Strangers to the Principles and Doctrines of the Goſpel, who can allow themſelves, on any occaſion, to *ſpeak evil of Dignities*, or vilify their Perſons, either by open and common Obloquy, or the more cover'd Arts of wicked Slander: *We have not ſo learned Chriſt, if ſo be we have heard the Truth as it is in Jeſus: We have no ſuch Cuſtom, nor the Churches of God.*

There will be the leſs danger of contracting this Guilt, to puniſh which *the Magiſtrate* ought *not to bear the Sword in vain*, if we the Governed would attend to our own private Conduct, as Chriſtian Members of the Community, and the Influence it muſt have on the general Welfare. The Rule is, * ἡσυχάζειν, *to be quiet*, † to give no Diſturbance, by being buſy medlers out of our own Sphere; but to *mind his own buſineſs*: A Buſineſs that

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* 1 Theſſ. iv. 11.

† *The primitive Word* ἥσυχος *is interpreted in* Heſychius *by* ἀπράγμων, *which implies a not medling out of our own Sphere.*

that will afford ſuch ample Matter of Circumſpection, Examination, and frequent Reſearch, that will leave us little Leiſure, or Inclination, to offend in the Point of factious Cenſure and Detraction. It will be enough to the ſober Chriſtian to regard and watch his own Life, that his Actions and Righteouſneſs be ſuch as may contribute to the Happineſs of the Society or Kingdom to which he belongs, and the ſeeking whoſe Welfare, within his proper Station, ought never to be abſent from his Mind.

The Principles of Honour and Conſcience ſo much in the Mouths of Men, if not deduced from and founded in revealed Religion, muſt needs be vain, uncertain, and precarious; and a greater Degree of Righteouſneſs is expected from Chriſtians, who are ſuppoſed to act on ſurer Grounds, and under a ſtricter Direction, than the Heathens; how much ſoever they, to our Shame, may ſeem to have excell'd in ſome Inſtances of the ſocial Virtues; if they have indeed excell'd us.

In the antient Apologies for Chriſtianity, it is conſtantly inſiſted on, that no other Syſtem of Religion ever had that friendly Aſpect on the well-being of human Society, as the Doctrines of the Goſpel. And if we deſcend to a particular View of its ſeveral Precepts, it will appear that *this Godlineſs* is

is indeed profitable *for the life that now is, as well as for that which is to come.* Temperance and Purity, Juſtice, Truth and Fidelity, Diligence in our Callings, Peaceableneſs and Subjection, are, if I may ſo ſpeak, the common Duties of the Goſpel. It moreover inſpires its Profeſſors with the moſt generous and diffuſive Sentiments, by recommending an ardent, extenſive, and diſintereſted Charity. It removes all Envyings and ambitious Emulations, which are the conſtant Diſturbers of Peace and Order, by ſtrongly enjoining Humility and Self-denial. It moderates our Love and Paſſion for the World, the great Prize of Contention, by propoſing a nobler Object of our Affections. It ſecures our juſt Obedience, by tying it down on the Conſcience, and requiring it of all, * *for the Lord's ſake*, as to his Miniſter, and cloath'd with his Authority. So true is it that a Chriſtian, if he liv'd up to theſe Principles, and walk'd worthily in the Vocation wherein he is call'd, would approve himſelf, beyond all queſtion, the beſt, the moſt uſeful and loyal Subject; and an amiable Pattern of that *Righteouſneſs* which alone can *exalt a Nation.*

What

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* 1 Pet. xii. 13.

What has been advanced under this Head will make any enlargment under the Second leſs neceſſary; which was to enquire,

II. What that *Sin* is, which, reproachful in itſelf, will bring down the Divine Diſpleaſure on a People.

Sin being a Deviation from the Rule of Righteouſneſs, by applying this Rule we ſoon diſcover any Defect or Enormity. And were we to bring this Reflexion home to our ſelves, it might furniſh too large occaſion to thoſe who love to be Clamorous on the Depravity of the Age; either out of a cenſorious Humour, or chiefly to gratify their Spleen and Diſappointment. Satyrical Invectives have not always proceeded from an upright concern for, or a ſtrict adherence to Virtue: Pride, Ill-nature, and Vainglory have not ſeldom had their ſhare in giving a keeneſs of Edge this Way. The Vices of the *Roman* People were never expoſed in ſtronger Colours than by the Hiſtorian *Salluſt*; and yet his Cotemporaries have left us but unfavourable Impreſſions of his Character; and his Style is plainly that of an angry Man. The Prophets indeed of the Old Teſtament ſhew a warm Zeal in bearing their Teſtimony againſt the Sins of the *Jewiſh* Nation, and freely denounce the Divine Judgments: But their Commiſſion is a Sanction to what they

ſpeak, and we are ſure the Corruptions complain'd of were not aggravated, becauſe they were guided by the Spirit of GOD.

I urge not this by way of Excuſe or Extenuation, as if we either had reaſon to boaſt of our ſelves as to the State of Morality and Religion amongſt us, or were free from Blame. I am ſure we are not ſo Good and Holy as we ought to be; as the many great Bleſſings and Favours we enjoy require of us. Charity however, or it may be a partial Love to my Country, tempts me to hope that things are not ſo bad as ſome would repreſent; whoſe gloomy Minds, through an injudicious, yet well-meaning Zeal, are ever ominating Evils; and are too often practiſed upon by the diſaffected to our Eſtabliſhment; who therefore delight in Complaints, and aggravate every Miſcarriage, becauſe out of deſperation they wiſh to ſee us unhinged and flung into Confuſion.

Still, I fear, there is too much to be laid to our Charge; if complaining may be thought to lead the way to a Reformation. Let us look back, to the Date of the glorious and ever-memorable Revolution, when we were delivered, by a great Deliverance, from the imminent Danger of Popiſh Superſtition and Arbitrary Power. Do we keep a wakeful and jealous Eye on all the Workings and Tendencies of that deteſted Superſtition? Or have

have we made a due Uſe of that noble Plan of Liberty which was then mark'd out for us by our great Deliverer? Are we not ſinking into a ſtrange ſupineneſs and indifferency for Religion, from which, I fear, nothing but a Perſecution or ſevere Judgment of GOD is likely to awaken us?

We hear much of a Love of Truth, and we ſee great Improvements in all Parts of human Literature, and I may venture to ſay that no Proteſtant Nation enjoys, with like Advantage, the natural Right of Mankind, a Free Inquiry and Examination. But have our Morals kept pace and been equally improved? Is not Religion rather become a cold Speculation and Entertainment than our ſerious Practice and Concern?

When was there ever ſuch an Inundation of looſe, profane, and blaſphemous Books? Far be it from me to call out to the Civil Power to reſtrain the Liberty of the Preſs; It is neceſſary to a Free-people: but I may ſay that the wanton, the ludicrous, the virulent Manner wherewith things High and Sacred have been treated amongſt us, beyond all Bounds of Reaſon and Decency, is altogether immoral, and makes one wiſh that an Expedient might be found out to put a ſtop to the one, and not abridge the other.

But I willingly check my ſelf, remembring the Obſervation of * *Livy*, *Querelæ ne tum gratæ futuræ, quum forſitan & neceſſariæ erunt.* Complaints will not be grateful, when at the ſame Time perhaps but too neceſſary. And indeed it would look like diſaffection to indulge them at the beginning of the auſpicious Reign of our gracious Prince; who is poſſeſt of all the Qualities that can endear Him to His Subjects, and raiſe our Expectation of publick Proſperity. Eſpecially when we ſee at the ſame Time the Royal Partner of the Throne ſhining with ſuch diſtinguiſhing Piety and Virtue, as muſt needs warm into Imitation all within the Influence of Her great Example; and might place Her at the Head of thoſe Ten Righteous, for whoſe ſake GOD, we hope, would avert his impending Judgments, and ſpare a more profligate People.

To cloſe then this Diſcourſe. I am now addreſſing my ſelf to thoſe whoſe generous Birth and Education, whoſe Intereſts and Figure in their Country, make them more nearly concern'd in the Conſequence, and therefore may well diſpoſe them to let the Argument I am upon have its

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* Livy's *Preface to his Hiſtory.*

its full Force and Efficacy. Permit me to urge it in the ſolemn and appoſite Words of the Prophet *Samuel.* * *Only fear the Lord, and ſerve him in Truth with all your heart: for conſider how great things he hath done for you.*

Are your Hearts full of Loyalty to our Great and Gracious Prince, whom the good Providence of GOD has placed over us? (And ſurely never any more merited the Hearts of all His Subjects) *Behold the King whom ye have deſired, whom ye have choſen.* Behold Him, by a wiſe and juſt Adminiſtration, dealing out to His People Wealth and Peace, and ſecuring us in the Enjoyment of our Liberties and legal Rights. Behold Him ſurrounded by an happy and numerous Iſſue, delivering us from the apprehenſions of a Doubtful and Popiſh Succeſſion, and giving us ſo many Pledges of a Proteſtant Settlement to diſtant Poſterity. Even all theſe Bleſſings, all this Glory, depends on our National Righteouſneſs. For as the Prophet goes on to warn us, and who without trembling can hear the fatal Effects of diſloyal and traiterous Sin? *If we go on to do wickedly we ſhall be conſumed both we and our King.*

Do

* 1 Sam. xii. 24.

Do we boaſt our ſelves of our *Sion*, to uſe the figurative Language of the Scripture, *the Perfection of Beauty, the joy of the whole Earth?* Do we *go about admiring its Bulwarks* and *telling the Towers thereof?* If we are unfruitful under theſe Advantages; *if we are not built up in our Holy Faith, elect and precious, meet for the Maſter's Work*; this fair and coſtly Structure will ſoon be unjointed and diſſolved, and *Jeruſalem become an heap of Stones.*

Do we eſteem our ſelves happy in ſome Advantages of our Clime and Situation; and much more ſo in our well-temper'd Conſtitution and Legal Government? * *A fruitful Land God maketh barren, for the wickedneſs of them that dwell therein*; and ſince a Government always degenerates with a People, our Liberties may by this means ſink into Oppreſſion, or what is worſe, Licentiouſneſs.

The preſent Solemnity ſuggeſts one Argument more. An Argument, that will give weight to all the reſt. An Argument that is well urged by our Church, when it directs us to pray, *That every one in their ſeveral Stations may ſerve painfully and faithfully* to the Publick Good, as well as GOD's *Glory, remembring the*

* Pſalm. 107. 34.

the ſtrict Account they muſt all one Day make. A Day, when You, my Lords, muſt be judged: When *we muſt all appear before the* ſupreme *Tribunal of Chriſt, to give an account*, not only *of what we have done in the Body*, but as Members of that Body in which we are placed.

In a Word. As Government is founded in Religion, ſo it is that, which can alone be its Strength and Stability. It is by Religion that every righteous Man beſt contributes his Endeavours for the Publick Good; and if, through the Tide of Wickedneſs, theſe are render'd ineffectual, It will Support and Comfort him, till he arrives at that Place where dwells Righteouſneſs; when he ſhall with full and joyous Conviction acknowledge * *Verily there is a Reward for the Righteous; there is a* GOD *that judgeth in the Earth.*

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* Pſalm lviii. 11.

FINIS.

ERRATA.

Page 10. line 20. read *which is* inſtead of *which, it is.*